

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-17 are pending. Claims 2 and 13 have been amended. No claim has been added or canceled. No new matter has been added.

Claims 13-16 were objected to for informalities. Claim 13 has been amended. Claims 2-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claim 2 has been amended.

Claims 1-9, 13-14, and 16-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Kara. Applicant traverses the rejection.

Claim 1 relates to a method for providing a value stamp over a communication network. The identifier code associated with the medium is used to perform certain customer relation management functions. A database is accessed using the identifier code. Thereafter, a specific action is performed according to the identifier code that has been received. That is, the claim recites, "...accessing a database using the identifier code received from the user, the database including first and second identifier codes that are associated with first and second customer-relation-management (CRM) information, respectively; performing a specific action according to a result of the accessing step, wherein a first action associated with the first CRM information is performed if the identifier code received from the user corresponds to the first identifier code stored in the database and a second action associated with the second CRM information is performed if the identifier code received from the user corresponds to the second identifier code stored in the database..."

The Examiner stated, "Kara discloses the invention including the step of performing the CRM function, which is depicted as '...the purchaser transmits the unique data pertaining to the stock material to the seller..' and '...by the database keeping track of the user's use of the stock and sending the number in a sequence' (see Col. 8, lines 30-44)." Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner has mischaracterized Kara. The relevant paragraph of Kara is reproduced below.

Note also that while in the embodiment, the purchaser transmits the unique data pertaining to the stock material to the seller, a system could be devised whereby the unique information is sent by a third party in response to a trigger supplied by the user. This trigger could be automatically generated by the printer scanning the paper and accessing a remote or local data base, or by the data base keeping track of the

user's use of the stock and sending the next number in a sequence. For some users (particularly high volume users) the seller could keep track of the anticipated next number in a sequence of preestablished numbers so that the user need not transmit any information. The unique code on the stock could, for example, be printed at the time of the transaction under control of a source other than the seller.

The above paragraph describes the use and management of the "unique data." It does not describe accessing a database using the received identified code and then performing a particular action according to the information received, as recited in claim 1. That is, the claim recites, performing a first action associated with the first CRM information if the identifier code received from the user corresponds to the first identifier code stored in the database and performing a second action associated with the second CRM information if the identifier code received from the user corresponds to the second identifier code stored in the database. Accordingly, the action performed differs based on the identifier code. This is not the case in Kara. The Examiner stated that Kara keeps track of the user's stock (first action) and sends the next number in sequence (second action). Performing one of these actions does not depend on the unique data that are received. Claim 1 is allowable at least for the reasons set forth above.

Claim 2 recites, "wherein the first CRM information indicates that the medium is a medium that has not been purchased by the user, the first action involving charging the cost of the medium to the user." The Examiner stated that the above features are disclosed in col. 8, lines 45-64 of Kara. Again the Examiner has mischaracterized Kara. Applicant requests the Examiner to more specifically identify the relevant section.

Claim 5 recites, "wherein the first action involves determining whether an affiliate of a service provider requires an additional supply of the medium by examining the identifier code received from the user, wherein the affiliate is the user or a provider of the medium to the user, and wherein the service provider is an agent authorized to provide the value stamp to the user." The Examiner asserted that these features are disclosed in col. 2, line 45 to col. 3, line 16. Applicant disagrees. The relevant section of Kara is reproduced below. Applicant is unable to locate the description that corresponds to the recited features. If the Examiner disagrees, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to identify the relevant part from the section below. Claim 5 is allowable.

The form that is used could be, for example, a sheet of paper divided into sections with a glue backing. The individual sections can be the size of a postage stamp (or other valuable document) and each section can (but need not) have preprinted data thereon. Each section then can be printed with information representing a value and the sections would be separated into individual stamps for use on envelopes.

For verification of the authenticity of each stamp, the original preprinted indicia from the form is read to obtain a decryption key. This key is then used to decrypt information stored in the security indicia that was printed at the time the remainder of the stamp information was printed. If the key is not present on the preprinted form, or if the key differs from the key assigned to that stamp in conjunction with the human readable data that was inputted by the purchaser during the initial payment, then the data on the form will not be verified and the mail will be rejected.

Note that the printer can be any printing device for creating images on paper, or it could be a device for storing images which can later be displayed to obtain the goods and or services. For example, the printer can be part of a vending machine which, prior to each activation, only contains paper having on (or within) it preestablished data unique to that sheet of paper. This paper stock has very little intrinsic value. When a user desires postage (or a money order or any other document), money or credit is used and a sheet of the paper is printed as described above. The printed sheet now becomes a valuable document. In this manner a storekeeper need not maintain a large inventory of valuable stock (such as stamps or money orders) since the value is added only as needed. In the situation with stamps, this invention would reduce, or eliminate, the need for preprinting stamps, since one, two or a sheet of stamps could be printed when needed. Thus, the seller of the stamps (money orders or other document) need not maintain all of the possible denominations or variations of the documents and only need maintain the relatively valueless paper forms.

Claims 13 recites a method for providing a value stamp. The claim recites, "generating customer-relation-management (CRM) information corresponding to an identifier code of a medium to be distributed to a user, the medium being suitable for printing a value indicium thereon to produce a value stamp, the identifier code being suitable for distinguishing the medium from at least one other medium; storing the generated CRM information in a database system, wherein the database system includes CRM information corresponding to a plurality of media; providing the medium to a user having access to a data processing system; receiving from the user over the network the identifier code of the medium to be used to

purchase a value stamp; retrieving the CRM information corresponding to the identifier code; and performing a task associated with the CRM information."

The recited generating step involves generating the CRM information that corresponds to an identifier code. Subsequently, the CRM information corresponding to the received identifier code is retrieved. A task associated with the CRM information is performed. Kara does not disclose any of the above steps. If the Examiner disagrees, Applicants respectfully requests the Examiner to identify what corresponds to the identifier code in Kara, and what corresponds to the CRM information in Kara, and what corresponds to the task that is associated with the CRM information in Kara. Claim 13 is allowable.

Claim 17 recites, "...determining whether an affiliate of a postage service provider requires an additional supply of the medium upon examining the serial number, wherein the affiliate is the user or a provider of postage medium to the user, and wherein the service provider is an agent authorized to provide the postage stamp to the user." Kara does not disclose at least this step. Claim 17 is allowable. The Examiner stated that it would have been obvious to offer a free sample to users; require the user to restock the medium; require the user to purchase the medium. Applicant disagrees. Without the use of the identifier code and corresponding CRM information, as taught in the present application, the above actions could not be performed in the manner recited. Kara does not disclose or suggest using the unique data additionally as the CRM information, in the manner recited. Claims 10-12 and 15 are allowable at least for this reason.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance and an action to that end is respectfully requested.

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PATENT

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 650-326-2400.

Respectfully submitted,



Steve Y. Cho
Reg. No. 44,612

TOWNSEND and TOWNSEND and CREW LLP
Two Embarcadero Center, Eighth Floor
San Francisco, California 94111-3834
Tel: 650-326-2400
Fax: 415-576-0300

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